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ABSTRACT

The 18th and 19th centuries saw a real tension between inductive and deductive methods of reason. Spokesperson for her era through her association with the popular "Godey's Ladies' Book," Sarah Josepha Hale addressed this tension in 1858, citing an article by Thomas Henry Buckle ascribing the method of deduction to women and that of induction to men, and clearly favoring deduction. Deductive reasoning is centered in community assent, while inductive thought derives from the power of the individual and reinforces that power. Authors of literature of the 1850s (recognized as "the feminine fifties"), such as Harriet Beecher Stowe in "Uncle Tom's Cabin," use symbolic references from which readers deductively construct meaning. Later 1850s' literature reflects and promotes the evaluation of women, with story movement becoming a linear progression. Educational institutions still privilege the inductive, but despite the historical precedent and the current predilection toward inductive reasoning, this can be balanced with some basic and practical implications for the composite pedagogy. In the classroom, where students' cognitive methods differ, various methods of collaborative evaluation can be considered. Taking a cue from Hale, perhaps accepting and teaching a change of mind can make an impact on the culture's order: economic, social, and political. (CR)

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Breaking through "The Dominion of Facts": Sarah Josepha Hale's Instructive Legacy

ED 402 583

When I first ran a draft of this presentation by some perfectly capable and educated colleagues, I encountered a disquieting number of blank stares. There she goes again. So I begin with some preliminary explanations. Just who is Sarah Josepha Hale and who cares? Well, for a good twenty years in the mid-nineteenth century, in various capacities, Sarah Josepha Hale (among other activities) edited and wrote for Godey's Ladies Book. Right. What's that? Well, this ------. Godey's was Blockbusters Video, CNN, NPR, movies, television, magazines, and Netscape all rolled into one. Hale was Ted Turner who wrote rather than ran the media. Godey's was a serialized literary journal that came out once monthly with sheet music, poetry, short fiction, long serialized fiction, fashions, moral essays, and Hale's firm hand on the "Editors' Table"—cultural descriptions made proscriptions in their very appearance in print.

My colleagues generally understood the terms I use—inductive and deductive—but understood those terms laced with such socio-political agendas as "good inductive thinking enables an individual with independent thoughts to compete aggressively in the academic marketplace. Deductive thinking draws on stale ideas that everyone knows, wishy-washy undocumented thinking, and corny old wives' tales. We'll see about that.

Finally, colleagues stared blankly at the notion that others could actually read differently from the ways they read. They all agreed that we should get our students to understand literature. But some adamantly argued that students should understand

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literature by applying methods of deconstruction while others argued for an understanding based in feminist or post-feminist methods. The stares returned when I offered that understanding and judging pre-industrial literature with an post-industrial mind seems both no-fair and inaccurate: chronocentric, perhaps. In the old days people didn't approach literature fresh out of self-esteem training to understand, get a handle on, judge, and cubbyhole the literary works. Rather, fresh out of humility training, prospective readers approached works with respect and let the written word understand, get a handle on, judge, and direct them. So now to work with these notions.

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw a real tension between inductive and deductive methods of reason. Spokesperson for her era through her association with Godey's Ladies' Book, Sarah Josepha Hale, addresses this tension in 1858, citing an "interesting article written by Mr. Henry Thomas Buckle, in which he describes 'The Influence of Woman on the Progress of Knowledge'":

> "The inductive philosopher collects phenomena either by observation or by experiment, and from them rises to the general principle or law which explains and covers them. The deductive philosopher draws the principle from ideas already existing in his mind, and explains the phenomena by descending on them, instead of rising from them." (463)

Hale continues to quote Buckle who ascribes the "method" of deduction to women and that of induction to men, clearly favoring deduction:

> "Now, there are several reasons why women prefer the deductive, and if I may so say, ideal method. They are more emotional, more enthusiastic, and more imaginative than men; they therefore live more in an ideal world; while men, with their colder, harder, and austerer organizations, are more practical and more under the dominion of facts, to which they consequently ascribe a higher importance." (463)

That "dominion of facts" had evolved in large part from the eighteenth-century European philosopher-rhetoricians' rejection of the deductive syllogism. Bringing forward what they learned from Francis Bacon, John Locke, George Campbell, and others, American scholars disseminated inductive methods into various fields. At a time when the "dominion of facts—inductive thought—fairly permeated the assumptions inherent in nineteenth-century American academic, political, and scientific arenas, Hale clearly "just said no."

Hale was not alone in her preference for reasoning method. Emerson criticizes the inductive thinkers,

> For, the highest species of reasoning upon divine subjects is rather the fruit of a sort of moral imagination, than of the "reasoning Machines" such as Locke" (80).

Poe slings mud:

> The vital taint, however in Baconianism—its most lamentable fount of error—lay in its tendency to throw power and consideration into the hands of merely perceptive men—of those inter-Tritonic minnows, the

> microscopical savans—the diggers and peddlers of minute *facts*, for the most part in physical science—facts all of which they retailed at the same price on the highway; their value depending, it was supposed, simply upon the *fact of their fact* . . .
>
> —a more intolerable set of bigots and tyrants never existed on the face of the earth. Their creed, their text and their sermon were, alike, the one word "*fact*" . . .

Deductive reasoning centers itself in community assent. Thinking deductively, we draw on those truths we agree to hold as "self-evident. Deduction situates its crux exactly where a broadly-held sense of community saves us from a Hobbesian rat-race in which self-reliant individuals operate within their own personal truth systems. Valuing deductive thought has, however, gone the way of Godey's Lady's Book. Since Hale's declaration, induction, with its ties to science and social Darwinism, has nearly supplanted drawing specifics from culturally held truths. Inductive thought derives from the power of the individual and reinforces the power of the individual. Induction works within a social (dis)organization in which pluralism reads "fragmentation." In its extreme we teach our progeny that individuals, each harboring a personal agenda of acquisition, reside in bureaucratic matrixes of rules circumscribing thought and growth, material and otherwise. Without a human (read "humanitarian") point of reference we cannot presume to hold any basic values or goals in common. Such, however, has not always been our cultural habit.

Recognized as "the feminine fifties" (Pattee), the mid-nineteenth-century decade, 1850–1859, saw various gradual transformations, including a nudge in cognitive method from the more deductive to the more inductive. The literature of the 1850s opened with America's first million-sellers, Susan Warner's The Wide, Wide World and Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin, both of which urge the reader to participate in an already-known system of thought and values. These books work deductively in several basic respects. And, I should add, as individualism and scientism have gained cultural privilege over deductive thought, by virtue of these appeals to deductive reasoning, The Wide, Wide World and Uncle Tom's Cabin have lost favor in the canon.

- Organization. Both authors draw the organization of their tales in a cultural shorthand from the one work surely familiar to the reader: The Bible. Both works offer vignettes that culminate (often in authorial voice) in a lesson for the reader. That is, they move not by an a→b→c→climax linear sort of plot, but by parables. They move not with a unity of action, but with a unity of ideology.
- Characterization. Warner and Stowe draw their characters (deductively) from a Christian ideal. Christian models—Ellen's mother, Mrs. Montgomery, and later Christian mother figure, Alice—act not as individuals, but as subsets of the Christian community ideal. Thus, the Christian Ellen can easily supplant the dying Christian Alice who has supplanted the dying Christian Mrs. Montgomery. These characters have no distinguishing features; rather, each participates in a known and shared ideal identity. Stowe's characters work similarly. The fugitive slave, Eliza, and Senator's wife, Mrs. Bird, share a common identity—motherhood—that transcends their more

earthly material differences. Eliza's husband Stowe likens to a Hungarian revolutionary. Uncle Tom acts not as an individual, but as a Christ-figure, *a priori* known to Stowe's readers.

- Coding systems. Mid-nineteenth-century authors communicated various "thoughts and feelings" though various symbolic references. Readers, then, deductively constructed meaning from these references. With floral coding, for example, Warner communicates her character, Ellen's frame of mind. Warner's contemporary readers *thought in* concepts signified by the names of the flowers that Ellen encounters in woodland scenes. Unfortunately, we have to look them up. Where? One excellent source is (naturally) Sarah Josepha Hale's 1832 and greatly reprinted Flora's Interpreter, and Fortuna Flora. Whereas we may read a laundry list of random flowers, Warner's readers gained a complex sense of "desertion," "despondency," "an expected meeting," "consolation," "true friendship," "preference," "tranquillity of mind," etc. right before Ellen meets Alice and all those foreshadowings unfold.

In addition to these authors' use of deductive appeals, Stowe quite explicitly affirms Hale's gender associations to methods of reason in Mrs. Bird's argument against the Fugitive Slave Law that her husband has helped establish:

> "You ought to be ashamed, John! Poor, homeless, houseless creatures! It's a shameful, wicked, abominable law, and I'll break it, for one, the first time I get a chance; and I hope I *shall* have a chance, I do!" . . .
>
> "Mary! Mary! My dear, let me reason with you."

> "I hate reasoning, John,—especially reasoning on such subjects. There's a way you political folks have of coming round and round a plain right thing, and you don't believe in it yourselves, when it comes to practice" (101-02)

By the end of the 1850s, we see in popular literature that individual action, character, and thought were becoming OK. The decade that began with our most revered men in skirts—from theological ministers, ministers to the sick, to ministers of law—ended with women cross-dressing into pants. More importantly, the decade ended not with men entering into women's preoccupation with domestic tranquillity, but with women entering into men's preoccupation with the rise of the market economy. And later 1850s literature reflects and promotes this evolution. Looking at Fanny Fern's (1855) Ruth Hall and E.D.E.N. Southworth's (1859) The Hidden Hand, for example:

- Organization. Story movement evolved from a unity of ideology to an A–B–C linear progression with heroines analyzing situations and with precise scientific objective accuracy inductively (indeed, individualistically and iconoclastically) creating a solution and/or plan of action.
- Characterization. Whereas the earlier Warner's and Stowe's figures participate in identities that readers deductively recognize as a cultural shorthand, the later Fanny Fern's and E.D.E.N. Southworth's women protagonists grab readers' attention by their refusal to participate in community-sanctioned roles. Characters Ruth Hall and Capitola challenge the economic dead-ends of their personal situations and make something of themselves by their own efforts. Correspondingly, the ideal woman's

role evolved from an earlier image of woman drawing her identity from the known good of God's will to a later image showing woman respectful of God's will but relying on her own. Moving inductively, attempting one experiment after another, progressively gathering information, protagonists such as Ruth Hall and Capitola develop a new social truth: women can work as individuals to sustain themselves.

As Ruth Hall and The Hidden Hand make evident, later mid-nineteenth-century literature answered the problem of economic oppression of women with role models who used independent analysis to think for themselves. Rather than advocating a change in the direction of the rising market economy and its attendant national and personal ethos, Fern and Southworth adapted their women characters to meet the challenges of a progressively developing Darwinist capitalism. And our educational institutions still privilege the inductive reasoning requisite for surviving in such an economy's culture. Despite the historical precedent and current predilection toward inductive reasoning, however, we do have much to learn from shared humanitarian truths. Heeding Hale's call to exercise our powers of deduction we can work to balance the power of inductive thought with some basic and practical implications for our current composition pedagogy.

In the classroom we can be aware of differences in students' cognitive methods.

- Not all students feel comfortable with the thesis driven essay. Note Hale's gender associations to inductive and deductive thought at work in the class room: "In your essay, make a strong penetrating point. Do not skirt the issue. Do not beat around

the bush." We can recognize the value of and legitimize the "beside the point.," admit various nuances of truth. Rather than squishing our students various shaped ideas into square holes, perhaps we can change the needs and expectations of the academic community.

- Currently many texts privilege Stephen Toulmin's schema of linear logic to building or drawing from a community of assent. In Toulmin's model for thought, each claim is based on articulated data, which in turn is based on an articulated warrant. Often these components need backing, rebuttal, and a qualifier. To augment this model that enables an individual to promote his or her own agenda quite apart from any community held sense of truth, we could legitimize and so promote community-held "backings": "ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country" "You're either part of the problem or part of the solution" "Why can't we all just get along" That is, we can give equal time to the enthememe—not denigrating it as missing a step that Toulmin's method supplies, but as pivotal on a step based in community good.
- We can consider various methods of collaborative evaluation. What better place to confront the self-esteemed self-assertive student who takes education not as an occasion of change and growth, but as an occasion to compete in the marketplace of grades.

On the internet, we can confront the implicit and too often explicit dictates of "netiquette." University technological services typically run messages to limit rich discussion of ideas.

Short notices to get rid of kittens and sell pick-ups are OK. The editors for the Pre-Text discussion group last year ran the following:

> Vic,
>
> the "dismembering" question hints at one more primal . . . . what is the gender for the list itself? . . . i'd prefer a more direct and masculine tone, a coming quickly to the point . . . . gabic wander through the outskirts of an idea smacks not of subtlety, but of the route of the erose pernor . . . .

In writing composition texts we can write with the richness that those texts advocate. Texts written to the point engender such writing. Discussing a text proposal with me, one editor wrote, "And the chapters should be broken up into small, sound-byte like units on smaller topics." And we're back to the gender of the list.

With Hale, I encourage us as purveyors of discourse to "transcend the boundaries" of "colder and austerer organizations" where ever they threaten to limit students and/or communication. Perhaps (as Hale puts it) as more women attend to intellection and more men begin to "be more of woman . . . in sweetness and moral height," we can, as a community, begin to vote, legislate, and act less from personal agendas and more to promote a common good. Taking a cue from Hale, perhaps accepting and teaching a change of mind can eventuate in an impact on our culture's order: economic, social, and political.